

Bark Beetle Mitigation

August 25, 2010

KEY MESSAGES

- Mountain pine beetles (MPB) are impacting millions of acres in north central Colorado. The effects of the bark beetle outbreak will continue to affect BLM lands as infected trees continue to die and fall.
- Wood product markets in Colorado have been in continual decline for the past 20 years. The lack of wood product markets in Colorado hinders the BLM forestry program's ability to treat acres through the sale of forest products resulting in increased cost and dependence on service contracts.
- The BLM has worked cooperatively with the U.S. Forest Service, Colorado State Forest Service, and other partners to achieve multiple objectives across administrative boundaries aimed at mitigating associated impacts and improving forest health. BLM Colorado has actively participated in the Colorado Bark Beetle Cooperative and the Front Range Fuels Round Table.

FOREST HEALTH CONCERNS AND IMPACTS

Concerns and impacts from the MPB epidemic are attributed to the landscape scale mortality of lodgepole pine stands. Large-scale tree mortality contributes to and accentuates the following impacts:

- Falling trees are a major safety hazard to human life and property.
- Falling trees pose a hazard to power grids/lines and communication sites on BLM lands. The hazard trees falling into power lines have interrupted power service and resulted in wildfire ignition.
- Falling trees in areas impacted by MPB contribute to heavy, hazardous fuel loads and increases wildfire intensity.
- Mortality due to MPB has altered and impacted habitat conditions for wildlife.
- Tree species not affected by MPB, such as aspen, are anticipated to benefit from the additional available sunlight and moisture from the increased open canopy post-tree fall.
- A multitude of additional insects and diseases impact Colorado forests. The spruce beetle, pinyon Ips beetle, Douglas-fir beetle, western balsam bark beetle, White Pine Blister Rust and spruce budworm are of concern to foresters in Colorado.

FORESTRY RESOURCES



BLM Colorado forestry program continues to seek opportunities to work cooperatively with the U.S. Forest Service, Colorado State Forest Service, local governments, communities and other partners to expand and increase the effectiveness of forest health treatments across administrative boundaries.

The integration of forestry and hazardous fuels programs has improved the Bureau's ability to strategically plan and implement hazardous fuels reduction projects within Wildland Urban Interface areas at risk from wildfire.

The BLM has been working in cooperation with power line utilities and communication site permittees to treat and remove hazardous trees.

As resources and funding become available, the BLM is prioritizing and implementing forest health projects to mitigate impacts to wildlife habitat and other natural resource values.

BARK BEETLE TREATMENT ACRES

2009 – 306 acres

2010 – 688 acres

2011 (Planned) – 950 acres